



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Felix Facchine; 410-313-2001
ffacchine@howardcountymd.gov

Councilwoman Rigby Announces Passage of the Affordable Housing Retention Act

Ellicott City, MD (July 7, 2020) – On July 6, the Howard County Council voted to pass Council Bill 13-2020, the Affordable Housing Retention Act, in a 4-1 vote. This legislation, introduced by Councilmember Christiana Rigby and co-sponsored by Councilmembers Opel Jones and Liz Walsh, provides the County and the Howard County Housing Commission with the right to purchase rental housing at the same terms and conditions as offered for a private sale.

Currently, the Howard County Housing Commission competitively bids for rental housing that is for sale. However, with limited resources and requirements to maintain or reduce rents, the Housing Commission is often out-bid by private companies. As a result, many previously affordable housing units have their rents increased, displacing residents and reducing the County's already limited affordable housing stock.

To address this issue, the Affordable Housing Retention Act increases opportunities for the Housing Commission to retain and expand the number of affordable units available in Howard County. CB13-2020 requires that an owner of rental housing provide notice and an offer to purchase the dwelling units to the County and the Housing Commission at the same terms and conditions as offered for a private sale.

Additionally, if property owners agree to maintain current affordable units onsite or create at least 20% affordable units at the property, they may forgo the right to purchase process for the County and Housing Commission. This legislation also outlines specific reporting requirements for the County and the Housing Commission to provide additional oversight over the county's affordable housing portfolio.

After receiving feedback from the public, Councilmembers Rigby, Jones, and Walsh filed seven amendments to CB13-2020. These amendments provide several technical corrections, eliminate loopholes, and add flexibility to the process. One additional amendment, submitted by the County Executive, clarifies the enforcement provision for this legislation.

"This legislation is the first piece of affordable housing legislation introduced by this Council since we have taken office," said Councilwoman Rigby. "Given how challenging it has been to advance affordable housing initiatives in this county, I'm grateful that we were able to find some consensus on this bill and work to preserve and expand existing affordable units in the county."

Peter Engel, the Executive Director of the Howard County Housing Commission, said, "Affordable and stable housing, which is the Commission's mission, allows people to thrive by providing the space to participate in all that the County has to offer. We are extremely appreciative that the Council and County Executive were willing to consider and approve this measure, which will help families and individuals live affordably in Howard County."

The proposed legislation was pre-filed on February 20, 2020 and was introduced at the Council's legislative session on Monday, March 2, 2020. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, CB13-2020 was tabled three times before being considered by the Council for a vote on July 6, 2020.

To read the legislation and amendments, visit <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Legislation>.

###